

FREE SAMPLE

The opening pages of

1968 Ford Mustang Restoration Guide

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RESTORATION ESSENTIALS

1968 Ford Mustang Restoration Guide

1968 Model Year — Hardtop • Fastback • Convertible

Factory-correct data for the hands-on restorer: VIN and warranty-plate decoding, engine and driveline specifications, paint and trim codes, production figures, casting numbers, torque values, and a step-by-step restoration sequence — all specific to the 1968 Mustang.

Key Specifications at a Glance

Total production	317,404
Body styles	Hardtop (65A/B/C/D), Fastback (63A/B/C/D), Convertible (76A/B)
Engine lineup	200 six; 289 (early); new 302 (210/230 hp); 390 (280/325 hp); 428 Cobra Jet (335 hp)
302 V8	Debut year — F-code 2V and J-code 4V
California Special	4,118 GT/CS built, including 251 High Country Specials
Assembly plants	Dearborn, Michigan • Metuchen, New Jersey • San Jose, California

Restoration work involves fuel systems, high-voltage ignition, and several thousand pounds of steel overhead. Disconnect the battery before electrical work, support the car on rated jack stands (never a jack alone), and keep a fire extinguisher within reach when fuel or welding is involved.

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How to use this guide. Chapters 1 and 2 give you the history that drives collector value. Chapter 3 explains exactly what makes this variant different from every other Mustang of its year. The technical chapters are written to be used at the car: decoding tags, checking castings, and planning the restoration in the right order. Keep a notebook with this guide and verify every number against the car in front of you.

1. Ford Motor Company: The Manufacturer Behind the Mustang

By 1968 Ford Motor Company was selling performance the way other companies sold appliances. Founded in 1903, built on the Model T and the 1932 V8, and rebuilt after the war into a full-line manufacturer, Ford had spent the 1960s turning Total Performance from a marketing slogan into showroom hardware: the 427-powered Fairlanes and Galaxies, the GT40 program humbling Ferrari at Le Mans, and the Mustang — the car that created the pony-car segment out of thin air in April 1964.

The 1968 model year was the first full year under the new federal motor vehicle safety standards that took effect January 1, 1968. Every 1968 Mustang carries their fingerprints: front and rear side marker lights or reflectors, an energy-absorbing steering column, and revised interior safety details. At the same time, Ford's engine lineup was churning faster than ever — the 302 small block arrived, the 390 gained a two-barrel version, and the 428 Cobra Jet landed in April as Ford's purpose-built street-and-strip weapon. For the restorer, 1968 is the year of running changes: early and late cars can differ in engines, trim, and details, so date codes and build dates matter more than usual.

Ford's racing programs in 1968 spanned Le Mans, NASCAR, and drag racing, and the street cars showed it: the 428 Cobra Jet was developed specifically to win Super Stock drag racing, and its April 1968 release — timed for the Winternationals season — made the Mustang an instant contender. The GT Equipment Group, the J-code 302 4-barrel, and the S-code 390 gave buyers a ladder of performance, while the California Special gave them style. When you see R-code or GT/CS badging on a 1968, you are looking at the street end of Ford's Total Performance pipeline.

Corporate Ford in 1968 was adapting to the new federal safety regime while feeding the horsepower race — expensive on both fronts. The 1968 Mustang shows both pressures: side markers, collapsible column, and revised interiors for Washington; the 302, the 390 2-barrel, and the Cobra Jet for the street. It is the most diverse early Mustang under the skin, which is why its running changes demand the most careful documentation.

2. The Mustang Model Line: 1964½ to 1968

The Mustang's first three model years were a sales avalanche — 559,451 for 1965, 607,568 for 1966, and 472,121 for the redesigned 1967. For 1968, Ford refined the bigger 1967 body rather than redesigning it: new grille and trim, the federally mandated safety updates, and a reshuffled engine lineup. The three body styles continued — hardtop, fastback, and convertible — and the GT Equipment Group continued as the performance image leader.

Two things define the 1968 model year in Mustang history. First, the 302-cubic-inch V8 replaced the 289 as the mainstream small block, in both two-barrel and four-barrel forms. Second, April 1968 brought the 428 Cobra Jet — Ford's purpose-built answer to the